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TAGS: [PREL](#) [HR](#) [KO](#)  
SUBJECT: CROATIA TO RECOGNIZE KOSOVO BY MID-MARCH

Classified By: A/DCM Rick Holtzapple, Reasons 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) In a February 29 meeting with the Ambassador, Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said that he intended to have Croatia recognize Kosovo by mid-March. He told the Ambassador he had already spoken with Serbian President Tadic and PM Kostunica on February 15 to inform them that Croatia would be measured in its approach, but that it would recognize Kosovo's independence once a majority of the EU had done so. Sanader said both had asked him to reconsider and not recognize Kosovo, but that he had told them it would be "impossible" for Croatia not to recognize. Sanader asked the Ambassador to explain directly to Washington that Croatia was taking a measured approach in hopes of maintaining an open channel of communication with Belgrade, and to minimize possible negative reactions against Croatia's sizable business interests in Serbia. Sanader said he had suggested to Kostunica that they meet in the coming weeks, but no such meeting had yet been scheduled.

¶2. (C) Sanader also expressed concern that Croatia's recognition of Kosovo could be met with threatening statements from Belgrade, either from the government or from other prominent figures, menacing Croatia's territorial integrity or looking to establish a "government in exile" for the "Serb Krajina" (i.e., the parts of Croatia the Serbs held during the conflict in the 1990's). While Sanader said he had no fears about Croatia's security or stability, he asked that the United States be prepared to denounce any such statements from Serbia.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador replied that Washington understood Croatia's position, and that recognition by mid-March sounded like a reasonable timeline. Waiting any longer, however, would be difficult, and was not likely help the situation. The Ambassador also noted that the US had been absolutely clear in opposing threats or statements that questioned the borders of any of the states in the region. While we would need to be careful not to respond to every minor provocation, he said that if there were statements made that the Croatians felt were serious enough to merit it, then he would work with Washington to prepare an appropriate response.

¶4. (C) Bianca Matkovic, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who also attended the meeting, said she had recently met with the Russian Ambassador to Croatia and informed him of Croatia's intention to recognize Kosovo. She said the Russian had replied that Russia understood Croatia's position. Bradtke